ART+WORDS BY
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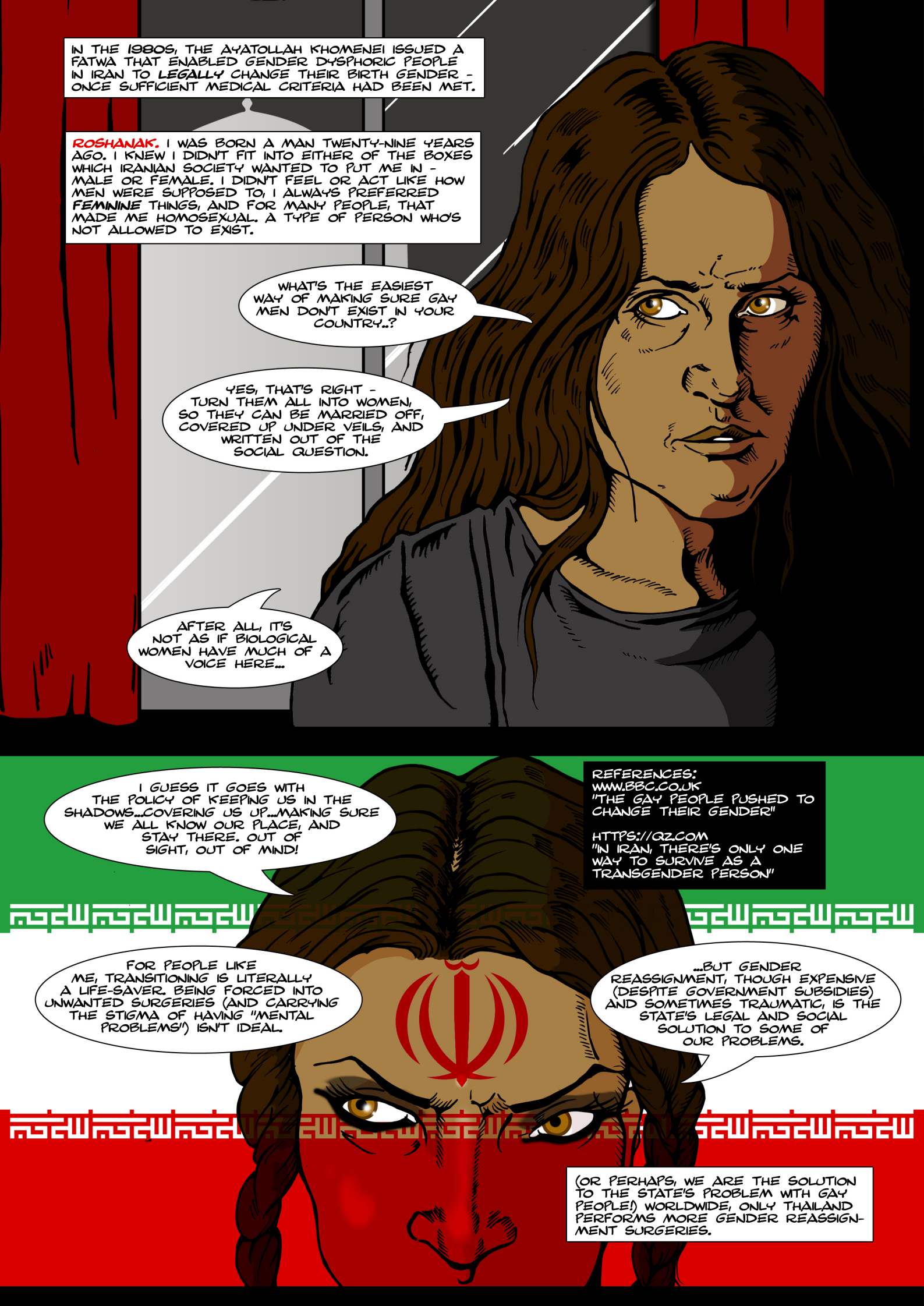
IN THE 1980S, THE AYATOLLAH KHOMENEI ISSUED A FATWA THAT ENABLED GENDER DYSPHORIC PEOPLE IN IRAN TO LEGALLY CHANGE THEIR BIRTH GENDER - ONCE SUFFICIENT MEDICAL CRITERIA HAD BEEN MET.
ROSHANAK. I WAS BORN A MAN TWENTY-NINE YEARS AGO. I KNEW I DIDN'T FIT INTO EITHER OF THE BOXES WHICH IRANIAN SOCIETY WANTED TO PUT ME IN - MALE OR FEMALE. I DIDN'T FEEL OR ACT LIKE HOW MEN WERE SUPPOSED TO, I ALWAYS PREFERRED FEMININE THINGS, AND FOR MANY PEOPLE, THAT MADE ME HOMOSEXUAL. A TYPE OF PERSON WHO'S NOT ALLOWED TO EXIST.
WHAT'S THE EASIEST WAY OF MAKING SURE GAY MEN DON'T EXIST IN YOUR COUNTRY..?
YES, THAT'S RIGHT - TURN THEM ALL INTO WOMEN, SO THEY CAN BE MARRIED OFF, COVERED UP UNDER VEILS, AND WRITTEN OUT OF THE SOCIAL QUESTION.
AFTER ALL, IT'S NOT AS IF BIOLOGICAL WOMEN HAVE MUCH OF A VOICE HERE...
I GUESS IT GOES WITH THE POLICY OF KEEPING US IN THE SHADOWS...COVERING US UP...MAKING SURE WE ALL KNOW OUR PLACE, AND STAY THERE. OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND!
REFERENCES:
WWW.BBC.CO.UK
"THE GAY PEOPLE PUSHED TO CHANGE THEIR GENDER"
HTTPS://QZ.COM
"IN IRAN, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO SURVIVE AS A TRANSGENDER PERSON"
FOR PEOPLE LIKE ME, TRANSITIONING IS LITERALLY A LIFE-SAVER. BEING FORCED INTO UNWANTED SURGERIES (AND CARRYING THE STIGMA OF HAVING "MENTAL PROBLEMS") ISN'T IDEAL.
...BUT GENDER REASSIGNMENT, THOUGH EXPENSIVE (DESPITE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES) AND SOMETIMES TRAUMATIC, IS THE STATE'S LEGAL AND SOCIAL SOLUTION TO SOME OF OUR PROBLEMS.
(OR PERHAPS, WE ARE THE SOLUTION TO THE STATE'S PROBLEM WITH GAY PEOPLE!) WORLDWIDE, ONLY THAILAND PERFORMS MORE GENDER REASSIGN-MENT SURGERIES.

WITHOUT GENDER REASSIGNMENT SURGERY, WE CANNOT BE LEGALLY RECOGNIZED, AND REMAIN AS EITHER HOMOSEXUALS OR CROSSDRESSERS - AND THEREFORE CRIMINAL DEVIANTS. THE POLICE, SOCIETY, AND EVEN OUR VERY OWN FAMILIES WILL STAND AGAINST US.

GET OUT OF OUR HOUSE! I WANTED A SON - NOT A DISGRACE TO THE FAMILY!

WE CAN EITHER *FLEE* TO MORE TOLERANT COUNTRIES, LIKE TURKEY OR GERMANY - ACCEPT GENDER REASSIGNMENT, AND ALL THE STIGMA WHICH GOES WITH IT...

...OR RISK GETTING DISOWNED, BEATEN, IMPRISONED, TORTURED, LASHED, RAPED, *EXECUTED*... OR ALL OF THE ABOVE.

REFERENCES:
"THE DIFFICULTIES OF BEING GAY IN IRAN", WWW.DW.COM

ADVOCATE.COM

THE ASSUMPTION THAT ALL TRANSPEOPLE MUST BE STRAIGHT, TO CONFORM TO SOCIETY AND LAW, MAKES LIFE AFTER TRANSITION A WHOLE NEW PROBLEM. LESBIANS, AS WITH GAY MEN, FACE PRISON AND LASHING.

*A CLAIM LATER DISPUTED BY THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT. SOURCE: REUTERS.COM

EX-PRESIDENT AHMADINEJAD WAS EVEN QUOTED IN 2007 AS SAYING PUBLICLY THAT HOMOSEXUALITY DOES NOT EXIST IN IRAN...*

THE NAME I CHOSE WHEN I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO LEGALLY TRANSITION, ROSHANAK, MEANS 'DAWN;' OR 'LIGHT' IN PERSIAN. I HOPE MY STORY CAN CAST SOME LIGHT ON THE STRUGGLES THAT THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HAVE TO FACE EVERY DAY.

IT'S ALSO THE NAME OF THE QUEEN OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT, THE CONQUEROR OF ANCIENT PERSIA. MAYBE ONE DAY. SOMEONE LIKE ME WILL CONQUER THE SYSTEMS WHICH VICTIMIZE SO MANY...

because sex and gender are not black and white

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